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Finding Lollius: Empathy, Textual Knowledge, and the Ending of *Troilus and Criseyde*

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Finding Lollius: Empathy, Textual Knowledge,
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The ending of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* has been a frequent source of dissatisfaction and confusion. After five full books centered on a doomed love between pagans, the final stanzas suddenly shift to an orthodox Christian rejection of worldly desire. Whether damning or praising the ending, critics generally recognize it as radically different from the lines preceding it. This report seeks to identify the root of that difference, and to explain its effect on the reading experience. The narrator of *Troilus and Criseyde*, a character in his own right, manipulates his putative source text—Lollius—to highlight the gaps left in his narrative. These gaps, in turn, constrict our perspective on the poem, preventing us from adopting either the Godlike Boethian viewpoint the *Troilus* appears to recommend or the melancholic attitude of the titular lovers. Instead, our point of identification is the narrator, who has read, as he persistently reminds us, a book that we cannot. Thus, even when the *Troilus* is read to the end, it feels incomplete. I ground this reading in both narratology and cognitive science, and illustrate it by examining two early printed "completions" of Chaucer's text: Wynkyn de Worde's colophon and Robert Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid*.

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FINDING LOLLIUS: EMPATHY, TEXTUAL KNOWLEDGE, AND THE ENDING OF TROILUS AND CRISEYDE

Troilus and Criseyde should satisfy us. Unlike so many of Chaucer's works, it is complete, rather than partial or fragmentary, and it has engaged readers virtually from the moment it was written. Yet the shifts and ambiguities in the poem's ending have frequently served as a stumbling block for both casual and critical readers, as when Walter Clyde Curry dismisses them as "a sorry performance," in which "the poet, without having given the slightest hint of warning, suddenly denies and contradicts everything that has gone before in the poem" (165). While later critics do not employ Curry's sharp language, they share his sense that the poem ends in a problematic or difficult fashion, one that calls out for explanation or correction, whether as "a redemption for the Robertsonian, a cop-out for the narratologist, and self-defense for the new historicist. For many, there is the sense that there must be some mistake" (Papka 267). Even those who wish to defend the Troilus ending measure their praise, acknowledging the prevailing sentiment that it functions as "an unsatisfactory conclusion to the work as a whole" (Spearing 107), replete with "curious twists and turns" and an "occasional air of fecklessness" (Donaldson 92). The ease with which critics veer into the affective and personal invites an extension of the the question: the issue becomes both what Chaucer does—or fails to do—in the ending of Troilus and

Criseyde and what reading this ending does to us. Chaucer's work subverts our narrative expectations, destabilizes potential empathetic attachments to its characters or narrator, and persistently refers to external textual sources, at least one of which, the famously fictional Lollius, is guaranteed to be unavailable, and therefore unfamiliar. These factors combined offer an explanation for critical dissatisfaction with the ending of the poem: Troilus and Criseyde confronts us with our own insufficiency as readers.

THE PROMISED END

If the Troilus ending fails to satisfy, it only does so as an ending. As a discrete piece of poetry, the stanzas constituting Troilus' death and apotheosis, the narrator's benediction to his "litel bok," and the admonition to young lovers all serve perfectly well; problems arise only when these stanzas are read in the context of what has gone before. Mankind, says Frank Kermode, exists "in the middest," the interval between creation and apocalypse, and awareness of our in media res existence leads us to "make considerable investments in coherent patterns which, by the provision of an end, make possible a satisfying consonance with the origins and with the middle" (17). The absence of this consonance in Troilus and Criseyde can have the sense of a broken promise, a feeling that the outcome forecast in the first stanzas has been tossed aside by the last.

To explain the narrative movement suggested by the poem's beginning, and the narrative problems created by its ending, I turn to the notion of thematic loops

originated by Victor Shklovsky, who suggests them as an answer to the question, "What precisely does a story need in order to be understood as something truly complete?" These loops are the most basic building blocks usable in crafting a story; to use Shklovsky's example, "What a story needs is love hindered by obstacles... A loves B, but B doesn't love A. By the time B falls in love with A, A has ceased to love B" (52-53). This example demonstrates the way that thematic loops can be nested within a narrative; the simplistic tale of A and B can be extended indefinitely by having each character continue to switch repeatedly between the opposite poles of love and hate. As pointed out by Julia Kristeva, any novelistic discourse is a potentially infinite series of these sorts of loops, limited or bounded (clos) only by the writer's necessarily arbitrary decision of where to begin and end their writing—the literary version of Kermode's life "in the middest." She goes on to highlight the straightforward clarity of a narrative defined by loops:

> the text turns on a thematic axis: the interplay between two exclusive oppositions, whose names might change (vice-virtue, love-hate, praise-criticism...). But the semic axis of these oppositions remains the same (positive-negative); they will alternate according to a trajectory limited by nothing but the initially presupposed excluded middle; that is, the inevitable choice of one or the other term (42-43).

Narrative loops, then, shape our expectations of a text by establishing the progression and change that will complete the story. An ending, as the final result of choices between these oppositions within the narrative, has what Peter Brooks calls a "structuring power," that retroactively imbues all moments prior to itself with significance (94). Endings, then, if they are to be effective, must be understood as the necessary outcome of what has gone before. Like Chekhov's gun, which must be fired by act three if it appears in act one, the introduction of love to a narrative creates in us an expectation that this love will be tested, that it will progress toward hate prior to the conclusion, even if it finally loops itself back to love again.

Troilus and Criseyde's first stanza gives us an expectation of how events will play out:

> The double sorwe of Troilus to tellen,
>
> That was the kyng Priamus sone of Troye,
>
> In lovynge, how his aventures fellen
>
> Fro wo to wele, and after out of joie,
>
> My purpos is, er that I parte fro ye (I. 1-5).

From the moment the narrative begins, we are given its eventual conclusion ("double sorwe"), its Trojan setting, its primary concern (Troilus' adventures in love), and the circular path it will follow ("fro wo to wele, and after out of joie"). The narrator reiterates the structure of the story to come just a few lines later, as he transitions to the narrative itself:

For now wil I gon streght to my matere,
In which ye may the double sorwes here
Of Troilus in lovynge of Criseyde,
And how that she forsook hym er she deyde (I. 53-56).

In these two passages, the narrator promises both more and less than he will eventually deliver. He states that his purpose is to tell the story of Troilus' "double sorwe"—the loss of Criseyde to the Greeks and the loss of her love to Diomede—before he departs, but in fact he tells much more than that. The poem continues for seventeen stanzas after Troilus accepts his loss and resolves to seek his own death in battle. These stanzas cover that death, his ascension to the eighth sphere, the narrator's address to his book, and his moralizing message—in short, the elements that have inspired critical scorn and discomfort. However, one element introduced at the beginning is conspicuously absent from the conclusion: Criseyde's death. Her death enters the poem at the same time she does: Criseyde's name is first mentioned in line 55, and the line immediately following makes it clear that she forsook him "er she deyde." However, this implied promise that Troilus and Criseyde will cover Criseyde's death goes unfulfilled; at poem's end, Troilus' unpromised death substitutes for Criseyde's promised one.

THE LADY VANISHES

In the moments immediately before his death, Troilus appears to take up residence in the excluded middle that Kristeva claims conflicts with our narrative

presuppositions, refusing to swing to either emotional pole. This absence of emotion can be seen clearly in his inability or refusal to hate Criseyde. Contrast Chaucer's Troilus, who proclaims "I ne kan ne may, / For al this world, withinne myn herte fynde / To unloven yow a quarter of a day!" (V.1696-98) with Boccaccio's Troilo:

> O vero lume, o lucidi sereni,
>
> Pe' quai s' allegran le terrene menti,
>
> Togliete via colei nelli cui seni
>
> Bugie e inganni e tradimenti sono,
>
> Nè più la fate degna di perdono.
>
> (O true light, O polished skies, / By which earthly minds cheer themselves, / Remove the life of her in whose bosoms are lies and deceptions and infidelities, / No more make her deserving of forgiveness) (VIII.18).

As Jamie Fumo points out, Troilus "cannot even utter the word 'hate,' hence the neologism 'unloven'" (21). While Boccaccio's Troilo likewise never states that he "hates" (odio) Cresida, his dismissal of her carries more finality, associated as it is with "lies, deceptions and infidelities." Chaucer brings Troilus to the brink of completing, and therefore closing, the loop containing his feelings toward Criseyde, only to pause and retreat. Criseyde's repudiation is left to Pandare, who proclaims, "I hate, ywis, Criseyde; / And, God woot, I wol hate hire evermore!" (V.1732-33), and prays for her death in much the way Troilo does ("And fro this

world, almyghty God I preye / Delivere hire soon!"), but Troilus' detachment—his insistent clinging to an emotion no longer present—precludes a narratively satisfactory resolution.

Troilus and Criseyde's final lines only amplify his problematic emotional flatness. The stubborn lover in the face of Criseyde's rejection becomes the cold, disinterested Troilus of his death and apotheosis. There is something undeniably off-putting in the figure of a Troilus who can "in himself lough right at the wo / Of hem that wepten for his deth so faste" (V.1821-22), a number which includes not only his fellow Trojans but also those of us who, in reading his story, have allowed ourselves to become emotionally involved. This is not to suggest that hatred of Criseyde is somehow preferable to a steadfast unrequited love, but Troilus's rapid loss of affective response over the last several hundred lines contribute to the sense of incompleteness and lack which generations of readers have perceived in the poem's ending. Troilus' divergence from both Troilo's and Pandare's hate of Criseyde puts him at least somewhat at odds with the seeming emotional arc of the poem, but at the moment of his death, Troilus unshackles himself completely from the thematic and emotional impulses which have seemed to drive his narrative. Instead, the loop he travels is a perfect circle, and he ends the poem expressing the same dismissive attitude as when he began it, utterly scornful of love and lovers. His emotions remain constant until he dismisses them with a disinterested laugh, and he is whisked off to the eighth sphere, out of the compass of his own story, "double sorwe" replaced with private mirth.

Troilus is not the only character that exits the poem with narrative business apparently unfinished. Criseyde herself departs from the narrative more than 700 lines before her Trojan lover. However, rather than the death implied in I.56, Criseyde's final words suggest a wealth of material yet to come:

> Allas, of me, unto the worldes ende,
>
> Shal neyther ben ywriten nor ysonge
>
> No good word, for thise bokes wol me shende.
>
> O, rolled shal I ben on many a tonge! (V. 1058-61)

In chronicling her anticipated descent into infamy, her reference to "thise bokes" refers to texts such as Troilus and Criseyde itself. However, Chaucer and his narrator refuse to shame her. With the exception of Pandare's brief declaration of hate, anti-Criseyde literature is implied but not apparent:

> Ne me ne list this sely womman chyde
>
> Forther than the storye wol devyse.
>
> Hire name, allas, is publysshed so wide
>
> That for hire gilt it oughte ynough suffise.
>
> And if I myghte excuse hire any wise,
>
> For she so sory was for hire untrouthe,
>
> Iwis, I wolde excuse hire yet for routhe (V. 1093-99).

In an apparent attempt to protect Criseyde, the narrator has given her a frustratingly vague exit. He reinforces her earlier reference to the existence of anti-Criseyde literature, but alludes to it as though it were common knowledge,

declining to engage in chastising her himself. Likewise, he remains obscure regarding the amount of time she spent in the Greek camp before giving in to Diomede's advances, claiming, "there is no auctor telleth it, I wene" (V. 1088). Her worst experiences (and death) are obscured, though still mentioned, with the result that we can only choose to abhor her or forgive her "for routhe," rather than empathize with or understand her.

The way that the poem obscures Criseyde's judgment is of particular interest. Her suffering and denigration is pushed off into other books, to be rolled on "many a tonge," and "publysshed so wide." Criseyde's sentence is to be confined within the literature of her own unfaithfulness, endlessly recapitulating her failed romance. In contrast, the narrator sets his "litel bok" loose to kiss the steps where the authors of antiquity stand, and Troilus, at the moment of his apotheosis, escapes from the literature of romance and courtly love, making his exit as the representative of a far weightier and more philosophical literature. As Gayle Margherita points out in discussing this difference, "Criseyde is always already bound to the material, the particular, the historically contingent. She is already exterior, and, as the poem's opening suggests, already dead" (268). However, this represents another narrative thread Chaucer leaves loose: the poem ends with no final judgment passed on Criseyde, and with the task of that judgment, and the narration of her eventual fate and death, passed off to other books, books that are acknowledged but never quoted. Criseyde has no definitive ending because Chaucer fails to provide us either a corpus or a corpse.

Spinning the Wheel

Criseyde's concern over the textual afterlife of her infidelity is hardly surprising: Books and reading run throughout Troilus and Crisyede. The narrator, of course, refers several times to his "auctor," as well as the other classical poets who have dealt with the matter of Troy: Homer, Virgil, Dare, Dictys. Criseyde reads about the Siege of Thebes, the precursor to the Siege of Troy, and Pandare settles in next to the fire with an "old romaunce" as the two lovers are consummating their relationship in the next room. Beyond these actual books, characters "read" the natural world, as when Calchas and Pandare perform astrological readings, or Cassandra interprets Troilus' dream. These examples all share one element with the books Criseyde predicts will "shende" her: they tell the future. The poem itself participates in this type of prophecy, foreshadowing its inevitable end quite literally from the moment it begins. This "future," naturally, constitutes the past to both the narrator and us, and our privileged temporal position allows us some degree of perceived superiority: we know how the story will end, how it must end. That sense of confidence in our own knowledge and foresight makes it all the more jarring when the ending, despite the copious foreshadowing, manages to surprise us.

Though neither book nor author is ever mentioned by name in Troilus and Criseyde, the attitude Chaucer displays toward knowledge of the future derives from Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy , making talk of thematic loops and

narrative circles particularly attractive. The motion from “wo to wele and after out of joie” is immediately recognizable as the trajectory of the wheel of Fortune, whose circular inevitability Lady Philosophy describes: “Tu uero uoluentis rotae impetum retinere conaris? At, omnium mortalium stolidissime, si manere incipit, fors esse desistit” (2.1.59-62). [Endeavorest thou to stay the force of the turning wheel? But thou foolishest man that ever was, if it beginneth to stay, it ceaseth to be fortune.] More obvious still is Troilus’ extended soliloquy on the seeming contradiction between foreknowledge and free will in Book IV, a soliloquy taken nearly word for word from V.iii of the Consolatio. However, this interlude is both incomplete and, within the text, misunderstood. Where Boethius’ Prisoner punctuates his questions on divine foreknowledge by stating, “quid enim uel speret quisque uel etiam deprecetur, quando optanda omnia series indeflexa conectit?” [Wherefore there is no means left to hope or pray for anything, since an unflexible course connecteth all things that can be desired.] Troilus, by contrast, follows his version with a plea to “Almighty Jove in trone” that he might “bring Criseyde and me from this distresse”(IV, 1079-81). More importantly, there is no response, either from Boethius’ Lady Philosophy or from Jove in answer to his prayer. He is, instead, met by Pandare, who shoos Troilus out of the temple, putting an end to his philosophizing, and telling him, “Thow to hire go, and make of this an ende”(IV, 1115).

The reader is presented with the clear markers of philosophical dialogue, or rather with the first half of an easily recognizable dialogue, yet the absence of a

second disputant prevents the issue from being fully addressed within the text itself. Instead, the reader is asked to bring her extratextual knowledge to bear in an effort to resolve the issue. The need for this knowledge is introduced by Troilus himself in his reference to “grete clerkes many oon, that destine thorugh argumentes preve” and other “clerkes olde.” The act of bringing together these texts makes the reader the medium through which the dialogue is completed. That reader becomes a necessary participant rather than a simple audience. Discussing Chaucer’s philosophy, Mark Miller portrays him as a poet “deeply committed to philosophical thinking... but one who became interested in pursuing that commitment independently of dialogue form” (2). The response this approach requires does not eliminate the distance between reader and text—in fact it accentuates it by drawing the reader’s attention to precisely what the text itself is not doing.

By highlighting the unbridgeable gap between character and reader and accentuating their imbalance of knowledge in the context of a digression on the nature of divine foresight, Chaucer creates an obvious parallel. According to Frank Grady, our response to Troilus’ Boethian allusion “not only calls on the poem’s readers to play the part of Lady Philosophy, but also asks us briefly to play God” (240). Grady goes even farther, essentially arguing that even readers who are unfamiliar with the Consolatio are transformed into “Boethian readers” through Chaucer’s construction of the poem:

> the text of Troilus and Criseyde helps to create precisely that kind of reader by exploiting the reader's foreknowledge of the end of the story, of both Troilus's "double sorwe" and the fall of Troy… Thus the text of Troilus and Criseyde-- which, as many critics have noted, often imitates the narrative structure of the Consolation of Philosophy-- enacts the Consolation's most difficult philosophical concept, the difference between human reason and divine intelligence, and between the human experience of time and the divine apprehension of eternity (230).

As readers rather than actors, we are placed in a temporally privileged position relative to Troilus, and even before we read the narrator's opening forecasting the "double sorwe", we are already aware of the ending that must follow as "a gradually coalescing inevitability" (Patterson 117). The result would appear to be an object lesson on the separation between the divine knowledge and the divine will: our position outside of the time contained in the Troilus allows us to know correctly that Criseyde will abandon Troilus for Diomede, that Troilus will die, that Troy will fall, but our foreknowledge has no impact on these actions whatsoever. The divine intelligence understood in literary terms, is a kind of cosmic First Reader.

Chaucer, however, immediately begins demonstrating how unachievable that type of foreknowledge is for humans, a process that will not reach its

completion until Troilus' apotheosis of Book V. The final stanza of Troilus' thoughts on foreknowledge reads:

> And over al this, yet sey I more herto,
> That right as whan I wot ther is a thyng,
> Iwis, that thyng moot nedfully be so;
> Ek right so, whan I woot a thyng comyng,
> So mot it come; and thus the bifallyng
> Of thynges that ben wist bifore the tyde
> They mowe nat ben eschued on no syde (IV, 1072-78).

The thinking is correct, if tautological: any event which is correctly foreknown cannot be avoided. What is interesting is the passivity in the statement that these events "mowe nat ben eschued," which implies that the future is something that is perpetrated on us, rather than something in which we participate. This is borne out both within the text, in the person of Calkas, who escapes the fall of Troy, but cannot prevent it, and within the dialogue between text and reader, as we are powerless to change the story, despite our knowledge of its outcome.

Moreover, our knowledge is far less perfect than we assume. Chaucer's use of foreshadowing, along with his exploitation of his audience's presumed familiarity with both the Troy myth and the forms and conventions of love poetry provide an object lesson in the gap between Boethius' two types of necessity. In the Consolation, Lady Philosophy explains that foreknowledge consists of both simple and conditional necessities:

> Duae sunt etenim necessitates, simplex una, ueleti quod necesse est omnes homines esse mortales, altera condicionis, ut si aliquem ambulare scias, eum ambulare necese est; quod enim quisque nouit, id esse aliter ac notum est nequit, sed haec condicio minime secum illam simplicem trahit.
>
> [For there be two necessities: the one simple, as that it is necessary for all men to be mortal; the other conditional, as if thou knowest that any man walketh, he must needs walk. For what a man knoweth cannot be otherwise than it is known. But this conditional draweth not with it that simple or absolute necessity] (5.6.103-09).

The seeming contradictions in Book V of Troilus and Criseyde are illustrations of this difference. We have some foreknowledge, some sense of the simple necessities of the story, such as Criseyde's betrayal or Troy's eventual fall.
Our confusion and dissatisfaction arise when we confuse the types of necessity our knowledge dictates. For example, if we read Chaucer alluding to Criseyde's death, or her shame and infamy, it is not necessary that these things occur in the present text, it is only necessary that we read the passage that alludes to them. What we understood to be simple necessity was in fact conditional, and not every condition is met, hence so many critics' irritation with the ending:

> From the first stanza, readers have been led to believe that they were privy to the future hidden from the 'historical' characters they observed; it is not surprising then that many have felt bemused and

> betrayed by the narrator who, at the end, reveals what appears to be his true, contradictory, and long-concealed intentions, and all without “the hint of a warning” (Hunter 256).

The sense of betrayal Hunter describes results from Troilus and Criseyde’s construction. Perpetual foreshadowing, combined with our knowledge of Trojan material familiarity with narrative tropes, gives us a sense of certainty that the poem then explodes. While our foreknowledge of the climactic events is accurate—Criseyde and Troilus are separated, she leaves him for Diomede, Troilus dies, and the city, presumably, falls—it is also incomplete.

The sudden turn from Troilus’ sorrow to his repudiation of love shocks us because it exceeds the unacknowledged limits of our expectations. When the narrator finally takes his leave, he has provided the tale of Troilus’ “double sorwe,” as he promised, but then he has continued, creating an ending that ultimately lacks Kermode’s “satisfying consonance,” in which the narrative does not remain within the clearly delineated, middle-excluding loops described by Shklovsky and Kristeva. In Boethian terms, our foreknowledge of the ending of Troilus and Criseyde does not describe a simple necessity but a conditional one; this knowledge is not only powerless to influence the narrative, it is incomplete; foreshadowing is not really knowledge about the future in the sense that God knows the future, it is only knowledge of the foreshadowing passage itself. Chaucer provides us the seductive illusion of divine foresight, but his poem’s final twists force us to confront instead our own limited knowledge.

EMBODIED READING

Once we grant that we are incapable of achieving God's viewpoint on time and events, whose viewpoint can we adopt? With whom do we identify, consciously or otherwise? As Troilus and Criseyde draws to a close, its titular protagonists both resist readerly empathy. Criseyde, even is she has our sympathy, presents her suffering only at one remove, as it were: the scene presented to us within the poem proper is resignation toward an end that never arrives. Troilus' last moments are even more difficult from an empathetic standpoint:

And in hymself he lough right at the wo

> Of hem that wepten for his deth so faste
>
> And dampned al oure werk that foloweth so
>
> The blynde lust, the which that may nat laste,
>
> And sholden al oure herte on heven caste;
>
> And forth he wente, shortly for to telle,
>
> There as Mercurye sorted hym to dwelle (1821-27).

This final passage offers a window into Troilus' emotions—how he feels "in hymself"—but immediately forestalls any empathic connection with his contemptuous laugh. He seems at first to invite identification, but shatters it with his incongruous laughter.

Troilus' alien emotion complicates our response to his death from a neurological standpoint: as we read, our brains automatically engage in embodied

simulation, a process driven by “mirror neurons” in the premotor cortex. These mirror neurons activate when observing another individual perform an action, and they fire in such a way as to suggest that the brain is, without triggering any action in its own body, simulating the pattern of neural activity associated with performing that activity—such as grasping, lifting, eating—itself. As Vittorio Gallese, one of the discoverers of mirror neurons, puts it:

> Anytime we meet someone, we are implicitly aware of his or her similarity to us, because we literally embody it. The very same neural substrate activated when actions are executed or emotions and sensations are subjectively experienced, is also activated when the same actions, emotions, and sensations are executed or experienced by others (Gallese 2009 524).

If, as Gallese goes on to suggest, the beginning of intersubjectivity and roots of empathy lie in reuse, the mental re-experience of emotions and sensations, then Troilus’ response here makes embodied simulation of his state virtually impossible. His response is utterly unlike our own, utterly unlike the response to which we have been led by the narrative to this point. The answer Troilus has to sorrow is a surprising coldness. Furthermore, a significant pronoun interrupts the presumed moment of Troilus’ perspective: “And dampned al oure werk that foloweth so.” This shift in viewpoint further inhibits any fledgling attempt to mentally embody Troilus, as it forces us to acknowledge that we are not seeing through Troilus’ eyes, or at least not directly. That “oure” finishes the work

started by Troilus' flat response and complicates any emotional response. In the context of film, Gallese and Guerra describe the disjunctive effect this type of perspective change can have on the process of embodied simulation: "The refusal of the POV shot and the absence of any reverse angle shot impair the viewer's ability to project herself on the movie, to share attitudes and behaviors with the characters, to empathize with the environment" (204). Even were we able to understand Troilus' attitude, we are inescapably confronted with the presence of another perspective in the scene.

With Criseyde absent and Troilus made strange, we are reminded not only that the narrator stands as the most easily accessible figure for our identification, but that in fact he has done so since the poem began. The narrator's posture toward his material emerges immediately, as he invokes the muse: "Thesiphone, thow help me for t'endite / Thise woful vers, that wepen as I write" (I.6-7). Thus as soon as Troilus' "double sorwe" appears, it is mediated through the narrator's affective response to writing, and by extension reading it. "The first of this narrator's effects on the reader," writes Dieter Mahl, "is that we are never allowed to enter fully into the action of the poem without being conscious of its historical distance from us and the narrative medium in which we encounter it" (215). The narrator is very much a character, as emotionally invested in his own way as any other, and he allows for a particular type of embodied simulation centered on that most familiar (and thus "reusable") of activities to the Troilus audience: reading.

Rather than the courtly lovers, we identify with he who "that God of Loves servantz serve" (I.15), the intermediary, the clerk.

The concept of a reading defined by empathetic identification with the narrator, as opposed to the more "traditional" characters, may explain the poem's obsession with other books. We are reading as a translator, perpetually aware of the rich textual history surrounding Troy. It also suggests a possible explanation for Troilus' peculiar physical passivity at key moments, such as his swoon prior to his consummation with Criseyde or his silence during the parliament. Speaking of simulation theory, Blakey Vermeule says, "In this light, narrative can be seen as a vehicle by which people test various scenarios without risking too much. Hooking us onto some mind or other is the way to grab our attention" (41). Just when we might expect a proactive and physical response from Troilus, he recedes, failing to offer us the hook that might shift our attention fully onto him—and away from the narrator's experience.

Interestingly, Criseyde does succeed at "hooking us." Perhaps the single most powerfully embodied experience of the poem occurs when she first notices Troilus through her window: "Criseyda gan al his chiere aspien, / And leet it so softe in hire herte synke, / That to hireself she seyde, 'Who yaf me drynke?'" (II.649-51). Note the turning inward— the feeling settles in her heart, she speaks to herself—as well as the way she describes her feeling in physical terms, as a type of sudden drunkenness. Troilus is occasionally given to throw himself on his bed, complaining about the fire of love inside him, but these are conventional

tropes of courtly love poetry. They are essentially literary behaviors, even if expressed physically, and do not really challenge the narrator's textual orientation of the poem. Criseyde's response, however, does. Rather than the recalcitrant or antagonistic female figure of the courtly love tradition, Criseyde expresses herself here as a desiring female body, and her conception of that body has the ability to hook us, challenging us to experience Troilus and Criseyde as lovers rather than readers. Given that, her final scene takes on more weight: at the last, she has been subjugated and lost the ability to challenge textual control; her body will forever more be subject to being rolled in the tongue of those who read books about her.

I have been discussing embodied simulation in terms of what Gallese and Wojciehowski call the Feeling of Body, "a mandatory, pre-rational, non-introspective process—that is, a physical, and not simply 'mental' experience of the mind, emotions, lived experiences and motor intentions of other people" (16). Our Feeling of Body is complex in regards to the Troilus narrator: the embodied experience he represents is not the experience of the narrative itself but the experience of reading and writing that narrative. The narrator's role as a character in the text of which he is the putative source creates an interesting sort of nested recursion. When Criseyde asks herself, "Who yaf me drynke?" do we understand the feeling as that of Criseyde or the narrator-as-Criseyde, our embodiment of his embodiment of her embodiment? For the bulk of the poem, the narrator acts as an intermediary, relaying the experience of the two lovers to us. After Criseyde's disappearance and Troilus' apotheosis, however, the narrator stands alone, and his

shift in tone and emphasis, as much as Troilus' odd laughter, drives dissatisfaction with the ending.

When Troilus damns "al oure werk that folweth so," he seems to be accentuating and deepening the connection between himself and his audience. This does not last long, as, following a stanza describing the "fyn" Troilus receives upon his death, the narrator breaks the collective identity implied by "oure werk" and consciously sets himself apart from his readers:

> O yonge fresshe folkes, he or she,
> In which that love up groweth with your age,
> Repeyreth hoom from worldly vanitee,
> And of your herte up casteth the visage
> To thilke God that after his image
> Yow made, and thinketh al nis but a fayre
> This world, that passeth sone as floures fayre (V.1835-41).

This didactic passage harmonizes with Troilus' final attitude—a Boethian one of contemptus mundi—but conflicts with virtually the entire rest of the poem. From an embodied perspective, the narrator's address to "yonge fresshe folkes" in which "love up groweth" emphasizes this audience's difference from himself: the next generation of Love's servants being addressed by the self-conscious servant of the servants of Love. The narrator's emphasis on orthodoxy, which does not appear prior to these lines, is frequently seen as a fundamental change: "the narrator suddenly assumes the full weight of his own culture's symbolic mandate,

vigorously condemning the same pagan world through which he has led us, his verses weeping as he writes, for nearly five full books" (Edmondson 181). I believe that the poem's concern with texts and sources suggests an alternative hypothesis: the narrator has not changed, but he wishes us to do so. His weeping is sincere, but he does not desire that response from his readership. Instead, the narrator crafts Troilus and Criseyde to differ from his source in a way that he hopes will lead to a doctrinally correct conclusion.

THE MAN WHO WASN'T THERE

This interpretation requires an exploration of the most infamous and difficult source in the poem, Lollius, the authority to which he regularly submits ("For as myn auctor seyde, so seye I,"), and of whom R.K. Gordon says: "No medieval reference to him outside of Chaucer has been discovered, and no such writer on Troy is known to us. Probably he never existed" (xvii). The debate on Lollius's identity is over a century old, but whether one believes that he is a stand-in for Boccaccio (and possibly a joke on his name) (East 396), or that "he is not Boccaccio or Benoit or Guido or Statius or Ovid or Boethius: he is simply Lollius" (Kittredge 1917 55), the important thing is that Lollius, as authority, is fictional. As Barry Windeatt explains more recently, Lollius is "designed to foreground the question of sources, and with that the role of interpretation" (39). Thus the source to which the Troilus narrator is so studiously deferential exists

only within the landscape of that narrative itself. By anonymizing the manuscript he is translating, Chaucer has created an absence not within the Troilus but outside it; there is in reality no Lollius text for us to find or reconstruct, which gives Chaucer, and by extension his narrator, enormous freedom as Lollius's putative translator. Translation, from the metatextual perspective, can be understood as:

> Essentially compound discourse, discourse about other discourse, and as a result the authority that was formerly seen as residing solely with the historical, empirical author and his inalienable claim to originality is now seen as displaceable throughout an entire textual system, which includes not only the author and his text, but also a potentially infinite series of translators (O'Neil 139).

By using Lollius to stand in for Boccaccio, Chaucer is positing his work as a new originary text; it is part of the textual web that makes up the matter of Troy, stretching from Benoit and Boccaccio to Dares, Dictys, Virgil, and Homer, but the fantasy of the absent source allows it some separation and space from its forebears.

This narrative distance allows the poet to maintain the position Seth Lerer assigns him: a "subjected status" in which he consistently reaffirms his obedience to his source, and a "controlling rhetorical position," as the only one familiar with this source (25). The dynamic is most readily apparent in another Chaucerian

narrator, the Clerk, who names Petrarch as the one who taught him the tale, both praising the original poet and highlighting his unique knowledge. He also establishes his controlling rhetorical position in an obvious way: even should one of the other pilgrims make their way to Padua in an attempt to check his work, so to speak, they would have no luck, as they will find Petrarch "deed and nayled in his cheste." Whether his narrators' sources are dead or fictional, the effect is the same: they are inaccessible, unknowable. From the perspective of embodied feeling, we can only ever approximate the narrator's experience, never duplicate it; we can no more read Lollius than we can speak to Petrarch. Therefore, if the Troilus narrator is a servant of the servants of Love, his poem posits us as its own servants, able to experience Lollius exclusively through the intermediary of Chaucer's narrator.

Lollius reminds us that the narrator's experience of and history with this story is not our own, as he works from a source text to which we are not privy. Thus his references to his "auctor" and his allusions to details such as those regarding Criseyde which have been "publysshed so wide," serve to reinforce his superior position and knowledge, to remind us that we can only approximate his reading experience through the medium of his own poem, which tells less than he implies he knows. He creates a genealogical or filial feel to his poem, one reinforced by his address to "yonge, fresshe folkes." The unspoken suggestion of Lollius is that any future generation's work on Troilus must rely on Chaucer's

poem, in addition to available sources such as Boccaccio and Benoit, to get the entire story, or at least as much as he wishes to provide.

Ultimately, the information he does not choose to share drives the unhappiness with the Troilus' ending. In the language of genealogy and parentage, the didactic message of orthodoxy that closes the poem carries an unmistakable paternalistic tone, one familiar to many parents: do as I say, not as I do. The narrator may himself weep as he writes over the tragic fate faced by the two lovers, or shield Criseyde from judgment out of pity, but he calls on his readers to reject the same emotional lures to which he has fallen prey. Troilus and Criseyde attempts to craft an emotional arc for its readers that fundamentally differs from that experienced by its characters or their narrator, resulting in a poem that, while finished, feels maddeningly incomplete. This sense of incompleteness informs two early attempts to correct or finish Troilus and Criseyde, one relatively simplistic, the other decidedly less so.

SPEAKING FOR CHAUCER

Attempting to solve this incompleteness, Wynkyn de Worde's 1517 edition of Troilus and Criseyde goes over the narrator's head, so to speak, and overwrites the poem's relative ambivalence towards Criseyde in the voice of Chaucer himself. Following the final authentic stanza of the Troilus, de Worde has added four more. The final one is a relatively standard colophon, closing the poem by proclaiming: "Thus endeth the treatyse / of Troylus the heuy / By

Geffraye Chaucer... / Inprynted by me / Wynkyn de Worde." The first three, however, are entirely different. While they offer praise for Troilus as "The moste treuest louer / that euer lady hadde," they are primarily concerned with attacking the character of Criseyde ("Of feminine gendre / ye womā most vnkȳde") and of women in general ("There is no woman / I thynke heuen vnder / That can be trewe / and that is wondre") (Benson and Rollman 275). Discussing these additional stanzas, Benson and Rollman offer two possible justifications for their existence: firstly, they may suggest that contemporary readers of Troilus and Criseyde understood it to possess a far more anti-feminist tone than is generally ascribed to it today. Alternately, they may be read as indicating recognition of "the inconclusiveness of the Troilus," by de Worde, who "saw it as a major flaw and not a sign of genius and so set about to correct it." While the first theory is plausible, and consistent with the frequently misogynistic tenor of de Worde's publications, it is less convincing in light of the text's attribution. The three anti-feminist stanzas are set apart from the body of the poem by a heading reading simply "The Auctour," and finish with a capitalized "Amen' prior to the less problematic fourth. This final commentary is presented as spoken in Chaucer's own voice, from the level of the poet rather than that of the fictive narrator of the Troilus, and thus it stands (or seeks to stand) as the final interpretive word on the poem. It transforms the Troilus into one of the books Criseyde dreads, one which has, in the end, "no good word" to say about her.

Inserting the "Auctour" accentuates the narrator's status as a creation of the text, rather than its source. In fact de Worde's colophon suggests that the narrator has radically misunderstood his own book, and requires correction from his creator. He provides the anti-Criseyde attitude absent from the original, and redirects the closing admonition to avoid the perils of love. De Worde's Chaucer resolves the closing shift by stepping in to say that both the narrator and Troilus have missed the point. Love, through this addition, should be avoided not because it opposes godliness, but because it exposes men to the wiles of wicked women.

Wynkyn de Worde's addition to Troilus and Criseyde did not survive into later versions, but another one did. For nearly two centuries, from 1532 to 1721, all major printed editions of Chaucer's work offered a solution to the Troilus' troublesome ending: Robert Henryson's Testament of Cresseid, viewed as the de facto sixth book (Forni 107). In the poem, Henryson's narrator reads Book V of Troilus and Criseyde, then pulls down an "uther quair" with the expanded story, in which Criseyde is cast out by Diomede, blames the gods for her rejection, and is punished with leprosy. As she sits on the side of the road, Troilus, not yet dead, passes by with other Trojan soldiers as they return from battle. He gives her a great deal of money, without realizing who she is, and she in turn does not look up to recognize him and realizes who it was only after the fact. She dies shortly thereafter, and is laid to rest in a monument commissioned by Troilus. While the poem offers fruitful grounds for interpretation on its own merits, my focus remains on its intersection with and completion of Chaucer's.

Firstly, the Testament finally presents the death that has been promised since Book I. By providing the narrative of Criseyde's death, Henryson closes the most obvious opening left from Chaucer's poem. Likewise, after he has been informed of her death, Troilus "swelt for wo and fel doun in ane swoun" (599), recalling the passionate (and prone to swooning) character that occupies the bulk of the earlier poem. However, once he has recovered, he merely sighs and says, "I can no moir; / Scho was untrew and wo is me thairfoir" (601-02). He may not repudiate her with the same force that de Worde brings to bear in his addition, nor does he ever veer into the hate exhibited by Boccaccio's hero, but Henryson's Troilus occupies a middle ground between Chaucer's impetuous lover and disinterested spirit, and in this state he buries his former lover and moves on. These two narrative maneuvers ably close Chaucer's unfinished loops.

An additional, subtler mechanic comes into play in the character of Henryson's narrator. When he reaches for the "uther quair... / In quihilk I fand the fatall destenie / Of fair Cresseid, that endit wretchitlie"(61-63), he is implicitly validating Chaucer's approach, even as he prepares for the doubt of the following line. On a purely structural level, by highlighting Cresseid's wretched ending as he begins the book, he is echoing the foreshadowing that Chaucer uses from the first line of Troilus and Criseyde, which promise to tell of "the double sorwe of Troilus." However, this narrator does not make the same efforts to avoid the implications of his foreshadowing as Chaucer's. As Scala notes, "This poet is accumulating information about Criseyde... Such information, significantly, forms

the basis and raison d'être of Henryson's poem" (200). However, the very existence of this information for the poet to accumulate is implied by its conspicuous and noted absence from Chaucer's document. Criseyde's lament about the evil things to be said about has the effect of authorizing Henryson's poem covering her "fatall destinie." At least within the broad strokes of plot, Henryson does with Cresseid precisely what Criseyde expects him to.

The narrators search for knowledge leads him to a famous expression of doubt in line 64, as he reaches for the new book: "Quha wait gif all that Chauceir wrait was trew?" The question is fraught, and Henryson seems poised to present his own narrative in opposition to Chaucer's. This doubting posture recently led George Edmondson to suggest a new interpretation of Henryson's Testament, based in Freud's notion of the Nebenmensch, the "man alongside me." The neighbor functions as a recognizable, familiar Other, in which we encounter aspects of ourselves, for better and worse; "The neighbor is both intimate and strange, both proximate and remote, both reassuring and threatening; he rattles us even as he ratifies us" (Edmondson 10). In applying this neighboring relation to texts, Edmondson creates a very different model of textual relationships than the genealogical one that Seth Lerer traces in Chaucerian followers like Lydgate and Hoccleve, one based on community rather than inheritance. Chaucer's poem, says Donaldson, "that Henryson's own poem had to acknowledge, had to go through. But this is not the same thing as claiming Chaucer's tutelage, let alone his paternity. The Troilus is not where the Testament comes from (42). His

conception is of particular use in conjunction with ideas of embodied narratology: my Feeling of Body triggers in an attempt to reuse my own experiences to simulate another body's, in a way that resists conscious control, whether from myself or the other. My feelings, sensations, emotions, may be inspired by the ones that I read or witness, but they remain my own, recycled into my best approximation of those felt by someone else. My experience of embodied simulation is a neighbor to the experiences I observe.

How, then, does Henryson's neighboring poem fit so comfortably with Troilus and Criseyde that it was seen as a necessary companion? It begins with that simplest of embodied experiences for a reader: reaching for a new book, the "uther quair." Chaucer's use of ambiguity and lack allows the opportunity and creates the desire for an expansion of Chaucer's tale, rather than a contradiction. Henryson's doubt, despite its explosive potential, ends up little more than a red herring, as he trades it for the certainty contained in his other book: "We do not know if all that Chaucer wrote was true," becomes "We know that Chaucer did not write all that was true." Criseyde's death is an acknowledged but unilluminated corner of Troilus and Criseyde, the finished but incomplete book. Of course, in completing this "missing chapter," the Testament was engulfed by its source, literally becoming part of the Chaucerian canon.

Though he never offers a definite answer to the question, Henryson's doubt still has an impact on the way we read Troilus on Criseyde, because his poem offers us a stable position from which we can ourselves ask, "Who knows if

all that Chaucer wrote was true?" Unlike the reticence of the Troilus narrator, the Testament is forthcoming and straighforward with its knowledge, and with its source. Scala points out that the "uther quair" that he pulls down is in fact the Testament of Cresseid that we are ourselves reading, but I wish to go even beyond that. Within the poem, when she knows she will die, Cresseid sits down with paper, "And on this maneir maid hir testament" (576). That is to say, Henryson's Testament of Cresseid features a narrator reading a poem in which Cresseid writes the titular testament, an organization that provides at least the illusion that we are reading the original story itself. Henryson cannot give us the fictive Lollius, but his Testament, by addressing narrative gaps in the original Troilus, approximates him. The Troilus, which the narrator presents as Lollius' descendant, becomes when read with the Testament, Lollius' neighbor.

Henryson's narrator also remains open to identification. Where Chaucer's narrator is withholding, and Lollius is occluded, Henryson's narrator is an unambiguously identifiable figure. As a reader, rather than a translator, his actions are directly analogous to our own, so that we may, on a subtle neurological level, mentally recreate the action of plucking a book from the shelf (Interestingly, mirror neurons function most strongly when dealing with actions related to grasping), reading it, and casting a skeptical glance at the fifth book of Troilus and Criseyde and its difficult ending. Furthermore, by resolutely carrying out its narrative promises as well as Chaucer's, Henryson's poem reestablishes our knowledge as the product of simple, rather than conditional necessity.

This, then, is why Henryson's Testament was accepted and circulated so readily: because, much like de Worde's less-successful Troilus coda, it provides a comfortable finality so resolutely absent in Chaucer's original. Cresseid is subjected to the judgment of the gods, found wanting, and sentenced to death by disease, a punishment presumably harsh enough for even the most determined Criseyde hater. However, beyond the "justice" that Criseyde suffers, explored by Gayle Margherita, the Testament of Cresseid also expands our scope as readers. By giving us this additional narrative, we not only see Criseyde judged, we are finally put in position to judge the Troilus narrator; we know, or at least are led to believe we know, as much of the story as he did.

The Testament fills the palpable lack Chaucer has left in his work; it responds to readerly desire. Nowhere is Henryson's dissolution of Chaucer's ambiguity clearer than in his final three lines. Chaucer may raise his Troilus to the eighth sphere and sends him off to an undisclosed "fyn" after his death, but Henryson's poem ends with the bald declaration, "Beir in your mynd this schort conclusioun / Of fair Cresseid, as I have said befoir. / Sen scho is deid I speik of hir no moir" (614-16). Where Chaucer leaves his narrative tantalizingly open, Henryson slams his shut.

Desire among Chaucer readers for the sort of closure provided by Henryson is not exclusive to the Troilus; for instance the Canterbury Tales, while unfinished as a complete work, also demonstrates in several tales the "additional ways in which Chaucer skirts, transcends, or even anticipates structural closure in

favor of an engagement between the narrative and the responding audience that fundamentally works against closure" (Grudin 1160). The Clerk's Tale, in particular, closes with Chaucer making a similar move to the one that he makes at the conclusion of Troilus and Criseyde, as the narration shifts wildly between multiple possible interpretations of the tale we have just heard, leaving it unclear what lesson, if any, the story of Griselda is meant to impart; Chaucer creates a lack of clarity by providing a surfeit of meaning.

The end result of this absence and obfuscation is a text that is self-evidently incomplete, that lacks, and as we read these lacking Chaucerian texts, they instill a desire in response. This desire is not necessarily identical with that expressed by the text itself: we may share the Troilus' narrator's desire to avoid the unhappy end of the story, but the desire underlying that is to know the story well enough to avoid it, to know the segments the narrator dodges and elides, to feel that we have experienced, as near as possible, the entirety of the story of Troilus and Criseyde as the narrator did.

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